Manzanar

Manzanar National Historic Site
California

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

We were judged, not on our own character . . . but simply because of our ethnicity.
Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga

We could only carry what we could carry, and my suitcase was full of diapers and children's clothes.
Fumiko Hayashida *(right)*

Kids played with toys like this small tank *(right)* in Manzanar's Children's Village *(above)*, the only orphanage in all 10 camps. Many were orphans before the war, others as a result of the incarceration.

ONE CAMP • 10,000 LIVES ONE CAMP • 10,000 STORIES

In spring 1942, the US Army turned the abandoned townsite of Manzanar, California, into a camp that would confine over 10,000 Japanese Americans and immigrants of Japanese ancestry. Margaret Ichino Stanicci later said, "I was put into a camp as an American citizen, which is against the Constitution because I had no due process. . . . It was only because of my ancestry."

For decades before World War II, politicians, newspapers, and labor leaders fueled anti-Asian sentiment in the western United States. Laws prevented immigrants from becoming citizens or owning land. Immigrants' children were born US citizens, yet they too faced prejudice. Japan's December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor intensified hostilities toward people of Japanese ancestry.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which authorized the military to remove "any or all persons" from the West Coast. Under the direction of Lt. General John L. Dewitt, the Army applied the order to everyone of Japanese ancestry, including over 70,000 US citizens. Dewitt said, "You just can't tell one Jap from another. . . . They all look the same."

They were from cities and farms, young and old, rich and poor. They had only days or weeks to prepare. Businesses closed, classrooms emptied, friends separated. Ultimately, the government deprived over 120,000 people of their freedom. Half were children and young adults. Ten thousand were incarcerated at Manzanar. From this one camp came 10,000 stories.

PIECES FROM THE PAST
Above, left to right: **Jerry Fujikawa volunteered for the US Army while confined in Manzanar. • The Takemoto family was among the first to arrive. • Manzanar's stark landscape inspired artists and poets. • Men, women, and children endured the same living conditions. • Playing with marbles was a popular children's pastime. • Every person wore a numbered tag to camp. • Fumiko Hayashida carried her daughter Natalie during their forced removal to Manzanar. This photo became an icon of Japanese American confinement. • Both Japanese and American sports, like *judo* and baseball, were popular at Manzanar.**

TWO FAMILIES, TWO STORIES

Before the war, the Miyatake and Maruki families lived near each other in Los Angeles. In Manzanar, they lived in neighboring blocks, yet their experiences were far apart. The Miyatakes' eldest son Archie met and fell in love with Takeko Maeda. They later married and spent over 70 years together.

The Marukis' eldest daughter Ruby came to Manzanar married and pregnant. She died in the camp hospital on August 15, 1942, along with the twin girls she was delivering. Decades later, Ruby's youngest sister Rosie said, "My mother never got over it. It just broke her heart."

Hundreds attended the Buddhist funeral of Ruby Maruki Watanabe and her twin girls, Diane and Sachiko.

Among the hardships of Manzanar, the wind and dust storms were some of the most unforgiving and unforgettable. Artist Kango Takamura captured this windy street scene in March 1943.

CONFLICT

Why didn't the government give us the chance to prove our loyalty instead of herding us into camps? **Joseph Kurihara**

People's diverse reactions to incarceration and conditions in Manzanar often led to conflict, erupting on December 6, 1942. A large crowd gathered to protest the jailing of Harry Ueno. The confrontation escalated and military police fired into the crowd, killing two men and injuring nine others. Soon the consequences of what came to be known as the Manzanar "riot" reverberated through all ten camps. Government officials issued a controversial questionnaire to identify and segregate those they deemed "disloyal." Koo Sakamoto and her husband gave conflicting answers. She was 19 and pregnant with their second child when her husband was sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center. They never saw each other again.

Japanese Americans boarded trains for a 500-mile journey to the high-security Tule Lake Segregation Center in northern California near the Oregon border.

REMEMBRANCE

It was shocking to your soul, to your spirit, and it took many years for people to talk about it. **Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston**

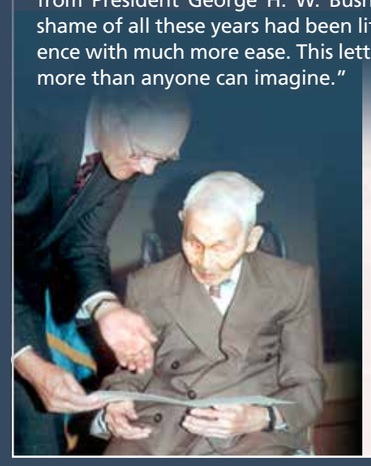
The Manzanar camp closed on November 21, 1945, three months after the war ended. Despite having regained their freedom, some people found life equally difficult after the war. Most spent decades rebuilding their lives, but few spoke openly about their wartime experiences. Buddhist and Christian ministers returned to the cemetery each year to remember the dead. In 1969, a group of college students came on their own pilgrimage of healing and remembrance. With the formation of the Manzanar Committee, this pilgrimage grew into an annual event now attended by thousands. Efforts to remember and preserve the camp eventually led to the creation of Manzanar National Historic Site.

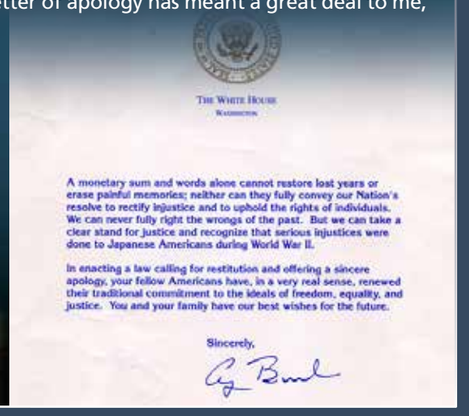
The annual pilgrimage includes a procession of banners, which ends at Manzanar's iconic cemetery monument.

APOLOGY

America is strong as it makes amends for the wrongs it has committed . . . we will always remember Manzanar because of that. **Sue Kunitomi Embrey**

In the 1980s, a congressionally-authorized commission concluded "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership" led to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. It recommended a presidential apology and individual payments of $20,000. After receiving her apology letter from President George H. W. Bush, Miho Sumi Shiroishi "felt as though the shame of all these years had been lifted and I was able to talk about the experience with much more ease. This letter of apology has meant a great deal to me, more than anyone can imagine."





THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

The US government issued over 82,000 apology letters and redress payments to Japanese Americans in order of age, oldest to youngest, between 1990 and 1999.

Reading the Manzanar Landscape

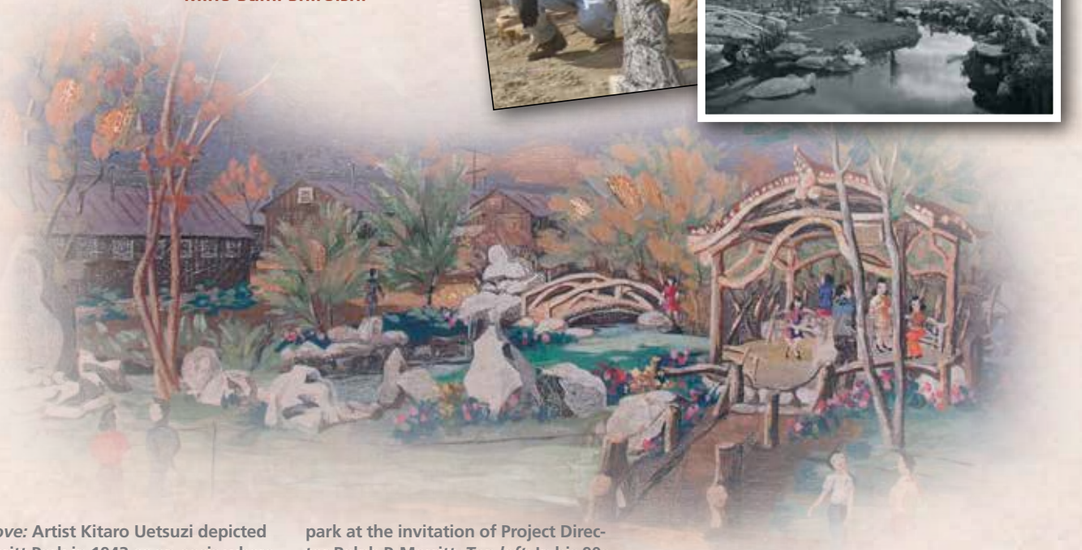
After the war, the government removed most of the structures, and buried gardens and basements. As time passed, Manzanar was further buried, both in sand and in memory. Today, when visitors see Manzanar, they may think there's nothing out there. Yet for those who learn to read the landscape, the place comes to life. A pipe sticking out of the ground becomes a water faucet where children splashed their faces in the summer heat. A foundation reveals the shoe prints of a child who crossed the wet cement. Ten iron rings embedded in a concrete slab evoke the humiliation of ten women forced to sit exposed next to strangers, enduring private moments on public toilets.

Whether driving the 3-mile self-guiding tour or exploring Manzanar on foot, visitors can see a number of Japanese gardens and ponds. People built gardens to beautify the dusty ground outside their barracks. Others built larger gardens near mess halls where people waited in line for meals three times a day.

The most elaborate garden of all was Merritt Park, which Tak Muto, Kuichiro Nishi, and their crew built as Manzanar's community park. In 2008, the Nishi family joined park staff and volunteers to remove decades of soil to reveal the park. The National Park Service continues to identify, uncover, and preserve these gardens and other historic features.

There is not much there anymore in the way of structures . . . but a lot of memories remain.

Miho Sumi Shiroishi

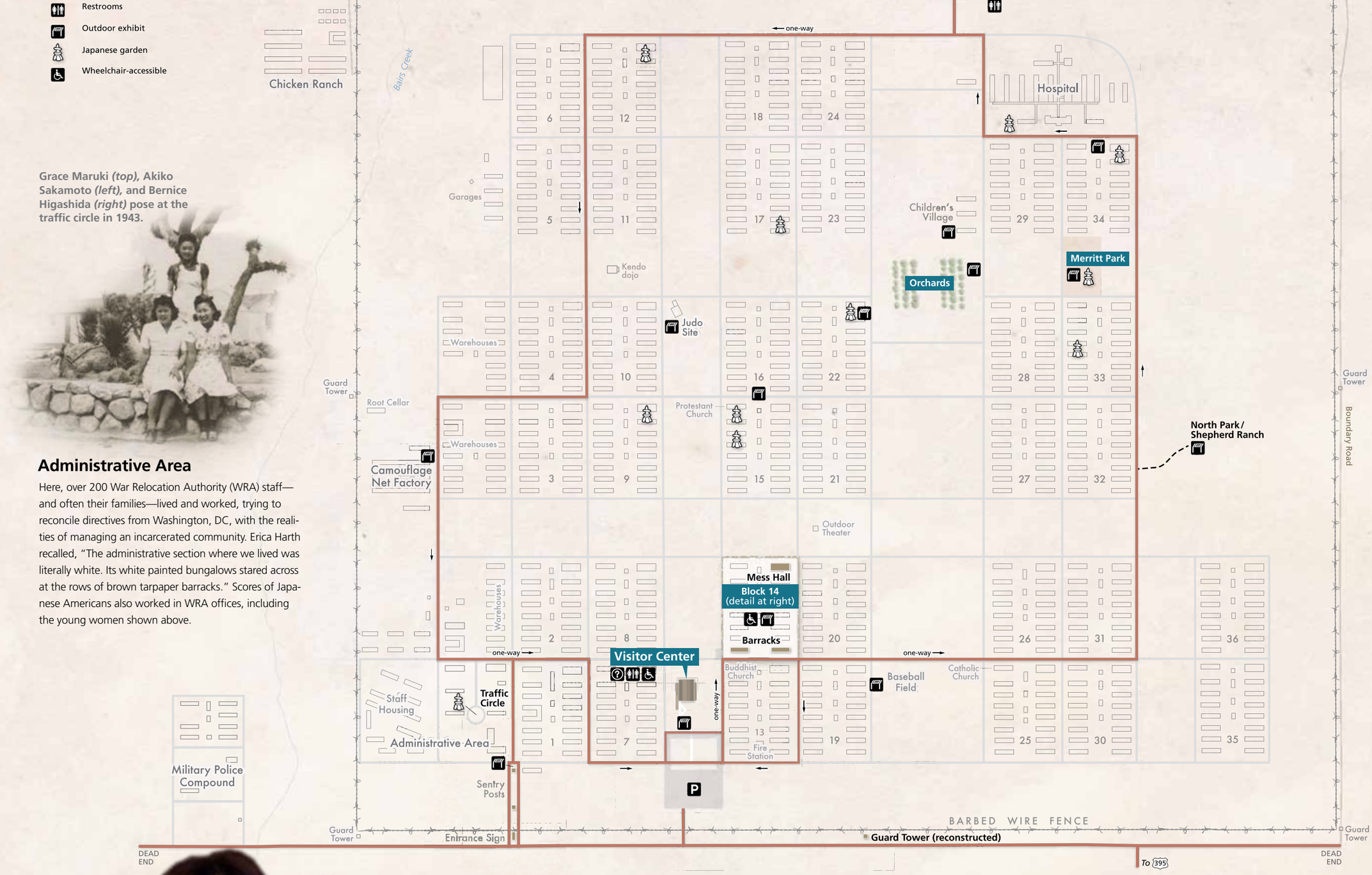


Above: Artist Kitaro Uetsuzi depicted Merritt Park in 1943 as an oasis where people could escape the monotony of barracks living. *Top right:* That same year, Ansel Adams photographed the park at the invitation of Project Director Ralph P. Merritt. *Top left:* In his 90s, Henry Nishi, son of park designer Kuichiro Nishi, helped excavate and restore his father's inspired landscape.

TO READ MANZANAR'S LANDSCAPE, LOOK FOR:

- Rocks arranged to personalize barracks "yards" or create gardens
- Sidewalks that led to doorways
- Water pipes that stood at corners of barracks
- Concrete foundations of latrines, laundry rooms, and ironing rooms
- Concrete blocks that supported barracks

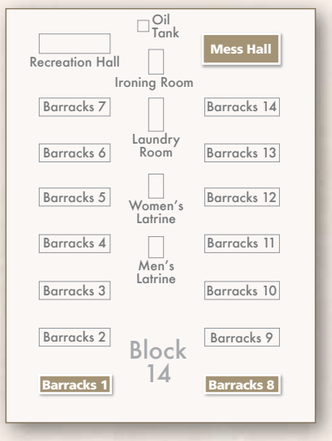
Many pieces of Manzanar's past lie scattered on the ground. It is against federal law to disturb or collect these items.



Buddhist Reverend Shinjo Nagatomi conducts a service at the cemetery.

Cemetery Monument

Catholic stone mason Ryozo Kado built this obelisk in 1943 with help from residents of Block 9 and the Young Buddhist Association. On the east face, Buddhist Reverend Shinjo Nagatomi inscribed *kanji* characters that mean "soul consoling tower." People attended religious services here during the war. Today the monument is a focal point of the annual pilgrimage and serves as an icon of Manzanar.



City of Barracks

Manzanar was arranged into 36 blocks. In most blocks, up to 300 people crowded into 14 barracks. Each barracks had four rooms—initially with eight people per room. Everyone ate in a mess hall, washed clothes in a public laundry room, and shared latrines and showers with little privacy. The ironing room and recreation hall offered spaces for classes, shops, and churches. Over time, people personalized their barracks and the blocks evolved into distinct communities.

Grace Maruki *(top)*, Akiko Sakamoto *(left)*, and Bernice Higashida *(right)* pose at the traffic circle in 1943.

Administrative Area

Here, over 200 War Relocation Authority (WRA) staff—and often their families—lived and worked, trying to reconcile directives from Washington, DC, with the realities of managing an incarcerated community. Erica Harth recalled, "The administrative section where we lived was literally white. Its white painted bungalows stared across at the rows of brown tarpaper barracks." Scores of Japanese Americans also worked in WRA offices, including the young women shown above.

Let It Not Happen Again

I have come to a conclusion . . . that we must learn from our history and we must learn that history can teach us how to care for one another. **Rose Tanaka**

The story of Manzanar has not ended—Japanese Americans and others keep it alive. At age 95, Fumiko Hayashida testified before Congress to support the *Nidoto Nai Yoni* ("Let it not happen again") memorial on Bainbridge Island, Washington. She was photographed at that site in 1942, holding her daughter—an image that became an icon of the World War II Japanese American experience. At age 100, Fumiko and her daughter Natalie returned to Manzanar for the first time since World War II *(left)*. Today, thousands of people who visit Manzanar and other sites of conscience feel connected to these places and their stories *(right)*. At Manzanar, some see their own struggles reflected in the injustices over 10,000 Japanese Americans faced here.

MORE INFORMATION

The Manzanar Visitor Center features exhibits about the camp and area history, plus a film and bookstore. Block 14 includes exhibits about the challenges of daily life. The grounds are open daily, sunrise to sunset. Check the park website for visitor center hours, programs, events, and special exhibits.

Safety and Regulations It is against federal law to disturb or collect artifacts. • Drive only on the designated tour road. • Wear sturdy footwear, a hat, and sunscreen. • Drink lots of water. • Pets are allowed outside if leashed. • Firearms are prohibited in federal buildings.

Emergencies dial 911

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

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The National Park Service cares for other Japanese American confinement sites: Tule Lake National Monument (CA), Minidoka National Historic Site (ID), and Honouliuli National Monument (HI).

Manzanar National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about your national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

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